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17 OPERATION TURQUOISE (RWANDA)

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Turquoise

France and several African nations mounted Operation Turquoise in June 1994 to establish a "safe humanitarian zone" in southwest Rwanda, where some of the worst genocidal atrocities were committed in the post-April 6 period. Operation Turquoise also safeguarded the airports at Goma and Bukavu, Zaire and coordinated initial efforts to care for the mass exodus of refugees from Rwanda into eastern Zaire.

At its height, Operation Turquoise consisted of 2,500 French troops plus another 500 troops from Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Congo. Deployment of this multinational force was welcomed by the UN Security Council in Resolution 929 of June 22, 1994, with a sixty-day mandate for humanitarian purposes. A French report to the Security Council characterized Operation Turquoise's activities as reconnaissance, ensuring the security of the zone, assistance to displaced persons and the extrication of persons at risk.

The French troops began withdrawing by the end of July, and completed withdrawal by August 22, 1994. UNAMIR (q.v.) troops replaced Operation Turquoise troops within Rwanda. Many of the African contingents remained in the area as UNAMIR troops.

The U.S. did not participate in Operation Turquoise, nor did the U.S. provide any funding for it. Expenses for this operation were borne almost entirely by the French, including incremental costs for the African participants. Official figures on Operation Turquoise's cost are unavailable, but French press reports indicate that the total cost to France was expected to be the equivalent of roughly US\$148 million.